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January 8, 2013

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

**FROM:** Patty O'Toole, Program Implementation Manager  
Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director

**SUBJECT:** Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment process

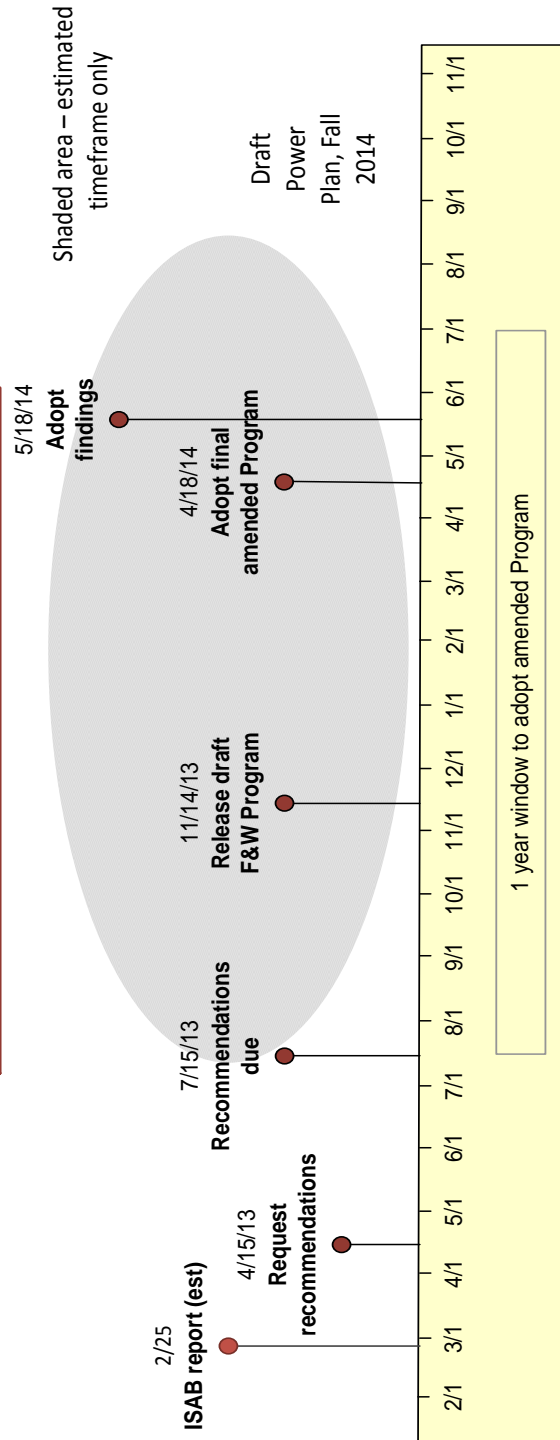
At the January Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting the staff will review the attached Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment documents with the Committee.

The first is a proposed schedule for the amendment process. The current schedule calls for the Council to request program amendment recommendations in April of 2013.

When releasing the request for Fish and Wildlife Program amendment recommendations, the Council may, as it has in the past, wish to include guidance on topics or gaps in the program that the Council would like the recommending entities to focus on in particular. The second attachment is a brief set of topics for discussion by the Committee.

Finally, staff has prepared a draft assessment of tasks called for in the 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program. This document will be emailed with the electronic version of the January packet and paper copies will be available at the January committee meeting.

## Proposed 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment Timeline ( 1/8/13)



1/1/13	Prepare letter requesting recommendations
5/1/13	Accept recommendations
7/1/13	Public comment on recommendations
10/1/13	Prepare draft Program
12/1/13	Public comment, hearings, consultations
2/1/14	Develop amended Program (Ex parte last 3 wks)
5/1/14	Develop findings

1/1/13

11/15/14

When releasing the request for Fish and Wildlife Program amendment recommendations, the Council may wish to include, as it has in the past, guidance on topics or gaps in the Program to help focus the recommendations. Even if the Council does not see the need to try to shape the content or emphasis of the recommendations, the Council still may wish to provide a short issue paper on the key current topics, similar to the issue paper the Council often uses to begin the power plan amendment process. If so, here are some topics for consideration that were synthesized from staff discussions:

- 1. Role of the Fish and Wildlife Program and the Council in the current regional context:** The Northwest Power Act directs the Council to take the recommendations primarily of the fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, develop a program out of those recommendations to “protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife, including related spawning grounds and habitat, on the Columbia River and its tributaries...affected by the development, operation, and management of hydroelectric projects;” and then work with the federal agencies operating or regulating those hydroprojects to implement the regional protection and mitigation program. The central point of this part of the Act was to use the Council and its regional planning authority to emphasize the importance of mitigating impacts of dams on fish and wildlife and utilize the expertise of fish and wildlife managers in shaping that mitigation through the Program.

Thirty-three years later we have exactly that. Today the Fish and Wildlife Program is a large protection and mitigation program that addresses hydrosystem passage and operations, fish and wildlife habitat protection and restoration, artificial fish production, non-native species, anadromous and resident fish and wildlife impacted by the hydro-system. This Program is almost wholly built from the recommendations of the fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, working with the large numbers of people in the federal river management agencies dedicated to this work. The federal river management agencies have internalized the regional program in a massive implementation effort, none more so than Bonneville through the use of its financial resources. This includes a set of multi-year implementation agreements executed directly with many of the state fish and wildlife agencies and tribes that are part of the basin and the Program.

Accordingly, it is an appropriate time to consider the future role of the Council and the Program. Much has changed since 1980, thanks to implementation of the Power Act. While the Council’s statutory responsibilities have not changed, the Act affords some flexibility in how the Council exercises those responsibilities.

Therefore as part of the amendment process, we encourage a regional discussion about the future of the Council and the Program. What should be the focus of the Program and of the Council’s work over the next decade? In what way can the Council and the regional program contribute more to the current situation? We have some ideas internally, but we really need to hear from the region how best to use this regional planning tool and body in the decade to come.

- 2. Program Objectives:** The most obvious gap in the Program always has been the lack of useful, measurable objectives above the subbasin and project scale to measure overall program progress and guide further program planning. It has always been a clear Program need, yet developing objectives of this type has proven difficult for a number of reasons. The ISAB also has expressed concern repeatedly about the absence of quantitative and measureable Program objectives and the lack of clear linkage between the current Program-level objectives and subbasin objectives. Should the Council put the energy and resources into making it happen at this time? Options include asking the region for more clarity and definition for the existing abundance and SAR objectives currently in the Program, or instead establishing high-level indicator (HLI) targets as objectives.
- 3. Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Data Management:** An 11-page broad guidance and framework document (November, 2012) was drafted with public input. Council staff and the Fish and Wildlife Committee developed this document with the intent to ask the region to respond to its inclusion in the Fish and Wildlife Program during the Program amendment process. Also, a revised draft research plan with broad categories of critical uncertainties, and an accompanying database containing specific uncertainties extracted from publications that link to these broad categories have been prepared in a similar fashion for consideration during the amendment process.
- 4. Program Habitat strategy:** Should the Council ask the region to consider the Program's habitat strategy in the context of progress being made regarding:

  - a. Evaluation of habitat change – Are our investments yielding benefits? Have we set up our monitoring and evaluation efforts to know in five, 10 or 20 years whether the basin's habitat characteristics have improved and whether those improvements have brought sustainable changes in the condition of focal species' populations? With all of the new developments (CHaMP, BPA programmatic AE monitoring program, ISEMP and others) are we getting there?
  - b. Integration of many habitat issues, in particular the role of food webs in the Columbia River Basin, also predation, hybrid ecosystems, climate, toxics and other topics.
  - c. Addressing the significance of mainstem fish habitat (that is, habitat in the mainstem Columbia River and the lower portions of the main tributaries). A number of scientific studies in the 1990s (e.g., the ISG's *Return to the River* and the National Academy's *Upstream*, identified these mainstem habitat areas as an important key to long-term sustainable success in restoring the Basin's natural productivity and abundance for anadromous fish and key resident fish species. Since then, the Council has included provisions regarding the importance of mainstem habitat in the Fish and Wildlife Program, however, very little of this type of work gets implemented. Should the region and the Program make an effort to focus on this component of the overall habitat picture? What options do we have for improving or restoring mainstem habitat?
- 5. Better integration of non-anadromous salmonids:** The Program's focus and organization is currently on anadromous salmonids. Should the Program be modified to better integrate other species such as non-salmonids (for example, lamprey and

sturgeon)? How can we do a better job of integrating other species impacted by the development, operation, and management of hydroelectric projects in the Program?

- 6. Artificial production:** Hatchery reform efforts in the Columbia River continue. How well does the program recognize and integrate the current understanding of ways to improve and evaluate the use of artificial production? Are there changes needed in the Program, or in program evaluation?

## 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program

### Council Tasks (draft Jan 15, 2013)

Done by Staff	Done by others	In Progress	Defer to others	Not Started	No longer needed
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#### General Themes

Maintain a robust habitat and artificial production focused program						
Periodic science review of new and ongoing projects and follow-up actions						
Increased requirements for reporting of results and accountability						
Emphasis on adaptive management and better decisions						
Develop a better set of regional quantitative objectives						
Periodic and systematic exchange of science and policy information						
Expanded monitoring and evaluation framework						
Report frequently on program progress						
Ongoing categorical and geographic reviews of all projects						

#### Primary Tasks

Accept recommendations to update subbasin management plans						
Shape the measures recommended for all areas of the program into multi-year action plans						
Consider standards based on the recommendations from the Hatchery Scientific Review Group						
Initiate a Wildlife Mitigation Crediting Forum that will allow parties to reach long-term settlement agreements						

#### Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Reporting

Involve a wide range of parties to establish guidelines						
Periodically, the Council will adopt or update relevant monitoring and evaluation methods and protocols						
Identify research priorities						
Adopt high-level indicators						
Implement a set of reporting metrics and protocols						
Develop and implement protocols to monitor status and trends of fish populations and to assess environmental conditions						
Ensure data sets and accompanying metadata sets associated with monitoring, evaluation and research actions remain available to the region in an agreed upon electronic format						
Identify data needs, reduce redundancies, and fill high-priority data gaps						
Publish a systemwide annual report that describes whether projects in the subbasins are achieving program objectives						
Publish an annual report which will provide an accounting of program fish and wildlife expenditures and fish related hydropower operation costs						

#### Program Implementation

Develop a three-year spending plan that will have a current spending estimate replaced by a new three-year estimate every year						
After scientific and administrative review recommend to Bonneville the level and type of coordination required to implement the program						
Implement the program in coordination with other federal, state, tribal, Canadian, and volunteer fish and wildlife restoration programs						
Work with national programs that influence our work in the basin, such as the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act						
Coordinate with organizations that track and monitor data on habitat quality, ocean conditions, fish and wildlife, non-native species distribution, climate change, and human population change at the Northwest regional scale						
Monitor the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing and relicensing proceedings and comment or intervene where appropriate						

#### Other Primary Tasks

FPC oversight board will conduct an annual review of the performance of the FPC						
Establish a regular system of ISAB review of the FPC's analytical products						
Conduct ISRP review of projects proposed for funding						
Make final recommendations to Bonneville on projects to be funded						
Conduct Step Review process for review of major investments, including new artificial production programs						
Implement Land Acquisition program						

#### Secondary Tasks

Develop a scientifically rigorous set of biological objectives Consider adopting the biological objectives into the program						
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Consider metrics that are consistent with the BiOps and productivity metrics that measure adult fish returns relative to juvenile outmigration						
Complete the assessments of resident fish losses when and where there is agreement on the appropriate methodology and prioritization of an assessment						
Where appropriate prioritization exists and agreement exists on the methodology, complete operational wildlife loss assessments						
Establish criteria for identification of stronghold areas						
Updates to subbasin plans will need to consider non-natives, climate change, and toxics						
Develop an environmental risk assessment template for resident fish substitution projects						
Co-sponsor, with Canada, a Columbia River science and policy conference to discuss scientific and technical developments, and international issues in key policy areas						

**Mainstem Operations**

May recommend changes in operations that are more biologically beneficial and cost effective than those in the biological opinions						
Develop and oversee appropriate experiments and tests while assuring public input						
Recommend that the regional structure should be jointly implemented by the Council and the federal agencies						
Work with others to reduce non-native fish predation on salmon and steelhead, especially by smallmouth bass, channel catfish and walleye						
Work with others to develop strategies to reduce competition from non-native species, such as shad, with juvenile and adult salmonids						